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Shontae Coyne is one of two Indigenous medical students supported during the first year of their medical degree through Avant's funding to the Australian Indigenous Doctors Association.

Shontae's passion to help her people improve their health came from her own experience and hardship. Sadly, both of her parents passed at a young age due to health problems, as well as others in her family from heart conditions and diabetes. Her desire to break the pattern of Indigenous Australians dying at a younger age and higher rate than non-Indigenous Australians is the main driver for her to study medicine at university.

Shontae says; "I remember seeing all the kids in my class being picked up by their parents, and thinking "I wish". My family are my biggest motivators, I want to be strong like my Nan, brave like my dad, but most importantly, I long to be fearless. I want to be passionate, loving and kind, patient and inspiring.

“ I want my life experiences to be a reason for my success, rather than an excuse not to succeed.”

"The only way we can see change within the Indigenous community is by making the change happen ourselves. Our elders have been a catalyst for change, and we need to make sure that change continues. I want to see a day where my people don't have to worry about dying 10-17 years younger than non-Indigenous people. I believe that as a proud Noongar woman, I can influence and hopefully inspire this change".

Shontae's desire to give back to her community and increase Indigenous life expectancy by promoting health education led to her successful application to AIDA for a bursary.

The funds Shontae received have helped relieve financial stress and cope with being away from her family. She has used the AIDA bursary to purchase books and technology, and contribute to accommodation in college. She says; "Living on campus has made study easier and helped me make friendships that will last a lifetime. One thing I learned is that medicine is a group effort, everyone is in the same boat. I also realised that I needed to stop comparing myself to everyone else in medicine, it is a personal journey; like everyone says it's a marathon, not a sprint. I am so thankful for this opportunity and being able to apply more focus on my studies because of this scholarship."

As well as progressing on her inspirational journey to become a doctor, Shontae has taken an active role in her community through volunteer work and mentoring other students transitioning to high school. Art and dance are important ways for her to connect to her cultural identity and she has been proud to share her story of vulnerability and resilience through the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People.